

A View from the Outside

**Predispositions and Expectations of Non-Aboriginal
Canadians Toward Aboriginal Culture and Heritage
Experiences Through Travel**

A Pilot Exploration

Contract #C1111-040163/001/CY

Presented to:

**Aboriginal Cultures and Tourism
Working Group**

Presented by:

**Research Resolutions
& Consulting Ltd.**



August 2004

Federal-Provincial-Territorial Culture/Heritage and Tourism Initiative

Background

- The Federal-Provincial-Territorial Culture/Heritage and Tourism Initiative (FPTTI) was officially launched in November 2003 as a two-year pilot project that ended in October 2005.
- This partnership between all provincial and territorial ministries responsible for Culture and Heritage and the Department of Canadian Heritage is co-chaired by Manitoba and New Brunswick.
- Three working groups were created to implement this initiative:
 - The Aboriginal Cultures and Tourism Working Group (led first by Alberta and then Saskatchewan);
 - The Building Market-Readiness Capacity Working Group (led by Ontario); and
 - The Economic Benefits Distribution Research Working Group (led by British Columbia).

Products

- The Initiative's aim is to support partnering jurisdictions in ensuring their culture/heritage stakeholders are able to become active in tourism on their own terms.
- The products to date reflect input from each jurisdiction.
- These products were created to stimulate discussion and create opportunities for dialogue between culture, heritage and tourism counterparts.
- The FPTTI partners are responsible for disseminating the products and key messages within their jurisdictions as they deem appropriate.
- The FPT Culture/Heritage and Tourism Initiative Coordination Office is prepared to respond to requests. They can be contacted at FPTTI@pch.gc.ca

Benefits of the FPTTI

- Continued collaboration with tourism counterparts on culture/heritage-driven projects creates opportunities for increased information sharing and strategic partnerships. The FPTTI will continue to develop the tools and information that will enable FPT culture/heritage ministries to:
 - 1) Provide leadership on cultural and heritage aspects of tourism-related policy;
 - 2) assist the culture/heritage sector to build capacity in tourism; and,
 - 3) create and promote understanding that the promotion, retention, and support of Canada's cultures and the sustainability of tourism are mutually reinforcing.

Explaining the context of the focus group report
A View from the Outside: Predispositions and Expectations
of Non-Aboriginal Canadians Toward Aboriginal Culture and
Heritage Experiences Through Travel

Tourism is an increasingly significant area of interest for Aboriginal communities because of its potential impacts, be they economic, social or cultural. Many communities have identified a need for assistance in undertaking tourism-related activities, which could be harnessed in support of Aboriginal cultural revival, sustainability, and cross-cultural awareness and acceptance.

The Aboriginal Cultures and Tourism Working Group

As part of a federal-provincial-territorial initiative, the Aboriginal Cultures and Tourism Working Group was formed to develop tools to strengthen the relationship between the Aboriginal culture and heritage sectors and other tourism stakeholders.

Context for commissioning A View from the Outside

The Aboriginal Cultures and Tourism Working Group identified a need to better understand domestic tourists' motivations and expectations vis-à-vis Aboriginal sites and experiences. Specifically, in its list of research themes, the working group expressed interest in exploring what non-Aboriginal Canadians know and feel about Aboriginal tourism, and the barriers they might experience to enjoying Aboriginal tourism. To address these questions, the working group contracted Research Resolutions and Consulting Ltd. to conduct three focus groups in Toronto, Saskatchewan, and Vancouver and to present their findings, which are described in the attached report.

A caveat for A View from the Outside

Since this research reflects the opinions and attitudes of a small number of people, caution should be exercised in assessing the study. The findings may or may not be representative of the population at large and cannot be projected to a broader population without quantitative testing.

For more information on any of the subject matter in this note, please contact the Coordination Office of the FPT Culture/Heritage and Tourism Initiative at [**FPTTI@pch.gc.ca**](mailto:FPTTI@pch.gc.ca)



Table of Contents

I. Executive Summary	3
A. The Context	3
B. The Challenges	3
C. Experience & Basic Attitudes	4
D. The Barriers	4
E. The Products	7
F. Is more research necessary?	8
G. Next Steps for the Aboriginal Cultures and Tourism Working Group..	9
II. Introduction	10
III. Detailed Findings	13
A. Experience is the best teacher	13
B. Remoteness of place	15
C. No trespassing	16
D. The welcome mat	17
E. Every city has "its street"	19
F. The way things were, the stories, the arts & crafts	21
G. Real interest or just the "right thing to say"?	23
H. Other Impediments: guilt and land claims	25
I. What is and is not Aboriginal tourism	26
J. Brochures	28
IV. Appendix	30
Discussion Guide	30

Caveat

Caution should be exercised in assessing this research. This analysis describes the opinions and attitudes of a limited number of people. The findings may or may not be representative of the population at large and cannot be projected to a broader population without quantitative testing.

I. Executive Summary

A. The Context

- In its statement regarding *conceptualizing the demand for Aboriginal Tourism*, the Aboriginal Cultures and Tourism Working Group identified a need to better understand domestic tourists' motivations and expectations vis à vis Aboriginal sites and experiences.
- Specifically, in its list of research themes, the Working Group expressed interest in exploring what non-Aboriginal Canadians know about Aboriginal tourism, how comfortable they feel coming into Aboriginal communities and the barriers they might experience to enjoying Aboriginal tourism.
- Focus groups in Toronto, Saskatoon and Vancouver were commissioned as an initial step in addressing these topics. The findings of these discussions are presented in the following pages.

B. The Challenges

- Comments by potential tourists included in this report provide a *view from the outside* that may help Aboriginal tourism entrepreneurs and governments at all levels to better understand and, in turn, to address barriers to interest in Aboriginal heritage and culture.
- "Barriers" represent *perceptions* and are not accurate depictions of Aboriginal communities, events or attractions. Perceptions can be changed. Based on the findings of this pilot project, negative stereotyping is minimized or disappears as exposure to Aboriginal culture and heritage by non-Aboriginal Canadians increases.
- The findings suggest that the more familiar non-Aboriginal Canadians are with Aboriginal people, the more interested they are in Aboriginal culture and heritage tourism experiences. In other words, *tourism* is a means of increasing *familiarity* with Aboriginal heritage and culture and, in turn, *familiarity* is a means of increasing Aboriginal tourism.

- In light of the potential social benefits of increasing understanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and the economic benefits that can accrue to Aboriginal communities from tourism, a multi-pronged effort is required. Federal, provincial and territorial governments and Aboriginal organizations and entrepreneurs need to work collaboratively to address the perceived barriers identified in this study.

C. Experience & Basic Attitudes

- The three pilot focus groups provide *insights* rather than *conclusions* about non-Aboriginal Canadians' attitudes toward Aboriginal tourism. Bearing this caveat in mind, for some non-Aboriginal Canadians there is a keen interest in learning more about Aboriginal art, culture and heritage; for others there is moderate to low interest and for some, there is a lack of interest accompanied by a wariness that would likely preclude seeking Aboriginal tourism experiences.
- Non-Aboriginal respondents who have lived in remote communities with high concentrations of Aboriginal people or who work with Aboriginal people on a daily basis have more favourable attitudes and have sought more Aboriginal tourism experiences than those with little or no direct contact.
- In light of the size of the Aboriginal populations in British Columbia and Saskatchewan and the propensity of respondents in these groups to have lived and/or travelled extensively in remote parts of their provinces and the Territories, it is not surprising that *direct experience* with Aboriginal people is more characteristic of respondents in Vancouver and Saskatoon than it is among those in Toronto.

D. The Barriers

- Perceived barriers to non-Aboriginal respondents gaining experience with Aboriginal culture and heritage in their own cities or when they travel emerged throughout the discussions. The reader is reminded that these "barriers" represent *perceptions* and are not necessarily indicative of the *reality* of Aboriginal communities, events or attractions. Some of the key areas of concern are highlighted below and discussed in greater depth in the following pages.
- The location of urban heritage and cultural activities. Urban community centres, while primarily serving Aboriginal populations,

occasionally provide close-at-hand opportunities for residents of a city to experience Aboriginal events (e.g., Folkfest in Saskatoon). In turn, these community centres are widely regarded to be in unsafe or unsavoury neighbourhoods that non-Aboriginal respondents are uncomfortable going to;

- The visual appearance of reserves, commonly described as "unkempt", "run down" or "uninviting" or posting "No Trespassing" signs;
 - The absence of clear signals about the level of hospitality a tourist can expect at Aboriginal cultural or heritage events held at community centres or on a reserve; and
 - The absence of *positive* coverage of Aboriginal events and activities in the mass media.
- It is important to distinguish between people's *expectations* and the *reality* of the hospitality they receive at Aboriginal tourism events and activities. **The reality:** respondents who have been to such events *do* find people welcoming. According to some, the more remote the location, the more welcoming their Aboriginal hosts seem to be. **The expectations:** These seem to derive from some respondents' lack of experience with Aboriginal heritage and cultural events and the absence of clear signals from Aboriginal organizers about which events are "open to the public".
- Thus, if an urban event is seen by Aboriginal organizers as a *tourism* event and therefore open to the general public, this fact needs to be clearly and widely publicized. And of course, staff training and development must ensure that when they come, non-Aboriginal guests are made to *feel* welcome.
- Venue is also important. To encourage urban non-Aboriginal Canadians, and particularly those travelling with children, to explore Aboriginal culture and heritage events, the sites must "feel safe". As noted above, traditional gathering places of Canada's urban Aboriginal people are often *not* in parts of town that feel safe to outsiders. Reserves with prominent "no trespassing" signs also engender concerns about security and safety.
- Wanuskewin Heritage Park near Saskatoon is an example of a "safe" Aboriginal cultural site that "works". Respondents in the Saskatoon

group go to this centre frequently and without hesitation. The same is not the case with events held at the Saskatoon Friendship Centre.

- Using venues in "tourist areas" of a city for "tourist-oriented" Aboriginal activities might be one way to increase the comfort level of non-Aboriginal people considering attending such an event.
- So long as stories about substance abuse in Davis Inlet, the killing of Dudley George at Ipperwash, and the 1990 armed confrontation between Mohawk Indians and the police near Oka re-surface on television and in newspapers, negative impressions of Canada's Aboriginal people are likely to persist among those who do not come into contact with them on a day-to-day basis.
- Regardless of how long ago these events took place, the "images" persist as examples of how "sad" the situation for Canada's Aboriginal peoples remains. There is also evidence of residual "guilt" regarding the historical treatment of Aboriginal people. This guilt can be a disincentive to the pursuit of Aboriginal culture and heritage *tourism* experiences among non-Aboriginal people.
- For the most part, "sad" or "guilt-ridden" and "tourism" are mutually exclusive. Tourists want to have fun, to feel safe, to have positive experiences. Until the image of Aboriginal people is more consistent with the expectations of a tourism experience (fun, safe, relaxing, etc.), it may prove difficult to entice some non-Aboriginal Canadians to seek Aboriginal tourism experiences.
- Public relations efforts might be useful in re-focussing attention on the successes of Canada's Aboriginal people, thereby building a strong base for development of the domestic tourism market.
- It is up to Aboriginal entrepreneurs and organizations to determine whether they want to be in the tourism business. Tourism is a fundamentally *human* interchange rather than simply an *economic* one. It requires a social contract between the tourist and the host – a social contract that Aboriginal communities must decide if they wish to build with non-Aboriginal Canadians. In other words, even if you build it, if tourists do not feel welcome, many will not come. As Rex Murphy reminds us:

Hospitality is the first thing that people wish to receive, and hospitality is but a grand word for you welcoming somebody

else into a just or a vital understanding of the way things came to be in the place that you live.¹

E: The Products

- Everyone loves a good story. In each group, respondents express particular interest in learning about Aboriginal history and culture through stories and legends. Noteworthy by their absence are associations between Aboriginal tourism experiences and *guiding, hunting or fishing* and *casinos*.
- Potential tourists want Aboriginal heritage and crafts to be *interpreted* - by storytellers, through demonstrations of canoe construction, bannock making, beading, and the like. Some also want to see performances, particularly of dancing and drumming. Their interest is in Aboriginal peoples' *past* rather than their present.
- Some want highly "sanitized" sites such as Pioneer Village in Toronto for Aboriginal history and culture. Others may want more authentic settings but even these people want the site to be clean, safe and to have the conveniences they have come to expect from *tourist* destinations. If the potential tourists have young children, they also want *hands-on* activities that would engage and interest their children.
- The sample brochures for Aboriginal tourism attractions and activities that were circulated in the sessions impressed all group participants. They wondered why they had *never seen* materials such as those distributed and called for "more marketing" to get availability of so many Aboriginal tourist activities and sites "out there".
- There are several possible explanations for the widespread lack of awareness of the promotional materials. It is possible that distribution is limited or that these types of brochures are not displayed in venues frequented by the respondents. At least equally possible, however, is that respondents have not "noticed" these types of promotional materials because they are not sufficiently interested in the products being offered to pick them out from an array of competing activities and destinations.

¹ Speaking Notes from Rex Murphy, Cultural Tourism Symposium, Regina, Saskatchewan Friday, January 19, 2001

- Wider distribution of brochures might be a positive step in a public awareness campaign but it is unlikely to alter more fundamental concerns about hospitality and safety that may cause some people not to "see" the advertising even when it is in a display case in front of them.

F. Is more research necessary?

- In this pilot exploration, focus groups were limited to three "regions" – the West (British Columbia), the Prairies (Saskatchewan) and Ontario. Respondents in these groups represented a wide range of *experience* with Aboriginal people, from minimal to extensive.
- Since one of the key findings of the pilot project is that direct and extensive *experience* with Aboriginal people seems to be a more important determinant in attitudes toward Aboriginal tourism than does the city in which non-Aboriginal respondents live, there does not appear to be a pressing need to "fill in the geographic blanks" (e.g., urban Quebec, Atlantic Canada, the North).
- The *extent* to which the attitudes and opinions proffered by pilot focus group respondents are held in other parts of Canada might differ from place to place but the *content* is not expected to change appreciably. As a qualitative exercise, the addition of more focus groups would not provide information about how many Canadians hold the various views described in this report.²
- The degree to which attitudes voiced in the pilot focus groups are held across Canada could be measured by a sophisticated *quantitative* survey. The sensitivity of the issues involved and the need to collect considerable background information on where people have lived and worked and the extent of their direct experience with Aboriginal people would, however, render such a survey difficult to design and costly to conduct. Traditional telephone interviews are, for example, unlikely to create the non-judgemental environment required to elicit candid responses from Canadians.

² The 1999/2000 Travel Activities and Motivation Study (TAMS) suggests that interest in Aboriginal cultural and heritage *tourism* activities is highest in western Canada including the Prairies (8% of the adult population claim to have taken an overnight leisure trip that included an Aboriginal event or attraction over a two-year period), marginally lower in Ontario and Atlantic Canada (7% each) and appreciably lower in Quebec (4%).

G. Next Steps for the Aboriginal Cultures and Tourism Working Group

- Instead of initiating more research, we recommend that the Aboriginal Cultures and Tourism Working Group explore the following:
 - mechanisms to acquaint Aboriginal tourism operators across Canada with the importance of the hospitality or "welcome" message and development of programs to get this message across to non-Aboriginal Canadians;
 - tools that encourage Aboriginal communities to identify how much of their heritage and culture they wish to offer tourists and for which they are willing to put out the *welcome mat*;
 - options for developing alternative venues for urban Aboriginal events designed for *tourists*;
 - a concerted public relations and media relations campaign to counter the persistence of *negative* images in the mainstream press.

II. Introduction

In its statement regarding *conceptualizing the demand for Aboriginal Tourism*, the Aboriginal Cultures and Tourism Working Group identified a need to better understand domestic tourists' motivations and expectations vis à vis Aboriginal sites and experiences. Specifically, in its list of research themes, the Working Group expressed interest in exploring what non-Aboriginal Canadians know about Aboriginal tourism, how comfortable they feel coming into Aboriginal communities and the barriers they might experience to enjoying Aboriginal tourism.

The Working Group asked Research Resolutions & Consulting Ltd. to conduct an exploratory research project to address these topics. To this end, three focus groups were conducted among non-Aboriginal Canadians who have taken leisure day or overnight trips and who live in Toronto, Saskatoon, or Vancouver. The specific requirements for group participation are appended to this report.

It is recognized that limiting the pilot exploration to three urban centres creates gaps in the information available. For example:

- Consumers in Canada's major urban centres may have very different views of Aboriginal culture and heritage experiences than those who live in non-urbanized areas.
- The Aboriginal experiences within "easy reach" of high concentrations of potential tourists in Atlantic Canada or Ontario may be strikingly different in content, quality and number than is the case in Quebec, Manitoba or British Columbia.
- Day-to-day encounters with Aboriginal people and access to Aboriginal communities by non-Aboriginal Canadians may differ depending on the concentration of urban Aboriginal populations, the density of Aboriginal communities in a region (e.g., Aboriginal people make up higher proportions of the total population in the Prairie provinces than in most other parts of Canada), and the like.
- Aboriginal culture, heritage and outdoor tourist opportunities differ across the country, ranging from large scale developments such as Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump in Alberta and Wanuskewin Heritage Park in

Saskatchewan to small outfitters and guiding services in Northern Ontario.

Focus groups were conducted between July 22, 2004 and July 28, 2004. Copies of the screening criteria and the discussion guide are appended to this report. Representatives of the Aboriginal Cultures and Tourism Working Group and Department of Canadian Heritage staff observed the focus groups. Judy Rogers, president of Research Resolutions & Consulting Ltd., conducted the sessions.

A summary of key demographic characteristics of focus group respondents in each centre is provided below.

	Toronto	Saskatoon	Vancouver
Total	8	8	10
Gender			
Men	4	4	5
Women	4	4	5
Age			
25 – 34 years	4	4	-
35 – 44 years	4	4	-
45 – 54 years	-	-	5
55 – 64 years	-	-	5
Household Income			
\$50,000 - \$79,900	5	5	6
\$80,000 - \$99,900	1	1	2
\$100,000+	2	2	2
Children Living in Household			
Yes	8	-	-
No	-	8	10

III. Detailed Findings

A. *Experience is the best teacher*

Positive attitudes toward and interest in Aboriginal heritage and tourism experiences are appreciably more prevalent among residents of Vancouver and Saskatoon than they are among respondents in Toronto. The difference among respondents in each of the cities is largely explained by the fact that more people in the western groups have had extensive direct interaction with Aboriginal people than is the case among Torontonians.

Non-Aboriginal Canadians in each of the two western cities who had lived in parts of Canada with high concentrations of Aboriginal people³ for extended periods of time or who have had work-related contact with Aboriginal peoples on a day-to-day basis are characterized by a "comfort level" not found in the Toronto group.

If you close your eyes, you can't tell who anyone is. We are all "just people". [Vancouver]

Proximity to Aboriginal communities in the city itself, on Vancouver Island and other gulf islands for Vancouverites and the availability of Wanuskewin Heritage Park just outside Saskatoon are important in providing day-to-day or short excursion access to Aboriginal heritage and culture for residents of these cities.

Wanuskewin is more than a museum; it has trails, cultural events . . . it is the "fall back". .. we do not have to seek such experiences further from home. [Saskatoon]

For Torontonians, the primary exposure to Aboriginal people seems to be negative media coverage (Davis Inlet, Oka, Ipperwash, etc.) and community centres in less than savoury parts of the city. Thus, "experience" and "exposure" generate *concerns* instead of *comfort* with seeking out Aboriginal culture and heritage tourism experiences. As noted in the quotations provided below however, these negative perceptions are not limited to Toronto.

I'm just scared to go [to any Aboriginal event or site] because all I know is what I read in the papers. [Vancouver]

³ E.g., Alert Bay, Yellowknife, Whitehorse, northern Saskatchewan.

They have just gotten a bad rap. You never hear about the good things. [Toronto]

It's like they live on another continent. Out of sight; out of mind. The only news is bad news about Aboriginal people. [Toronto]

B. Remoteness of place

Despite their stated knowledge that many Aboriginal people live in their own city, some non-Aboriginal Canadians in each of the three cities hold the view that Aboriginal people and their reserves or communities are only in "distant" and "far north" parts of the country. This perception is most pervasive in Toronto.

The perception of "remoteness" creates a sense of distance between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people: one group lives "here" while the other lives "there". In turn, the physical distance becomes a psychological or sociological separation – an "us/them" mentality. Of course, Aboriginal people in Canada are nations separate from other residents of the country and this "separateness" is reflected in the language respondents use (*us/them*).

Toronto's respondents seem particularly unaware of *nearby* communities they could visit to learn more about Aboriginal culture and heritage experiences. For example, none of the respondents in Toronto was aware of the experiences available within a one to two hour drive of downtown Toronto: Six Nations in Brantford or the *Spirit Walk* in the Kawarthas. When the moderator mentioned these sites, respondents recognized that "far away" was not so far at all.

C. No trespassing

In Vancouver, urban reserves with "no trespassing" signs create a wariness among some non-Aboriginal respondents. In Toronto, reserves are considered to be "scary" or "unwelcoming". In Saskatoon, some respondents also sense a barrier to entry of reserves. The "fencing off" of Aboriginal communities and the absence of a clear "welcome" message at urban Friendship Centres offering Aboriginal cultural experiences contribute to a heightened sense of discomfort among some non-Aboriginal Canadians.

Because they do not feel welcome in urban Aboriginal neighbourhoods or cultural centres, there is a tendency not to want to "go there".

In North Vancouver there are big signs saying "no trespassing" [on reserves] but there are no signs like that in my neighbourhood. [Vancouver]

If you try to drive onto a reserve in the lower mainland, you feel like a complete total outsider. Like you should not be there. [Vancouver]

I'm a little hesitant – you hear different things . . . [a reserve is] something I would want to go to first as an adult before I approach it with my kids. There are a lot of stereotypes. [Toronto]

I've never had this experience, but some people say that if you park your car [on a reserve], it is going to be stripped down. It is just a myth, but those things are out there. You don't know what is going to happen to you up there. [Saskatoon]

Reserves are like single-family sub-divisions. They are fairly unkempt. Generally, you don't feel welcome. [Vancouver]

At the same time, respondents consider reserves to be Aboriginal communities' *back yards*. Just as respondents would not want strangers wandering through their own back yards, they respect Aboriginal communities' sense of privacy. "No trespassing," signs are, however, taken as a clear signal that non-Aboriginals are not welcome.

Similarly, Friendship Centres are designed to meet the needs of urban Aboriginal people (see Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre mandate below). They do not have an "outreach" program for non-Aboriginal Canadians. To serve their communities, these centres are located in areas with high concentrations of Aboriginal people. These are not necessarily the areas that *tourists* or local middle-class residents want to visit for a "fun" or "educational" activity.

The Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society offers programs and services oriented towards Aboriginal families and children in the Vancouver & Lower Mainland area . . . We are a community resource and referral Centre for the Urban Vancouver area. The Centre offers programs in social, cultural, educational training, health and other life enhancing assistance. . . . The new location is easily accessible for the aboriginal community and provides social, educational, cultural, spiritual and sports activities.⁴

In an event such as Saskatoon's Folkfest, pavilions for a variety of ethnic and cultural groups showcase *cultural displays, dance, song, food, folklore, fables and skits . . . of up to 25 ethnic pavilions* including "Indian and Métis" held at the Indian & Métis Friendship Centre. Everyone in the group had been to Wanuskewin Heritage Park, most attended Folkfest, but only one respondent had visited the "Indian and Métis" pavilion at Folkfest.

D. The welcome mat

Uncertainty about where they are welcome generates a heightened sensitivity among some respondents: are Friendship Centres "open" to everyone? What about reserves? Letting others know where and when they are welcome . . . not just able to visit . . . but welcome . . . would be helpful signals to encourage non-Aboriginal Canadians to visit Aboriginal tourism attractions and sites.

I like to go to places with friendly people. I like people to say "hello" to me when I am travelling. [Toronto]

In some ways, perhaps First Nations like to lead a fairly insular life. Maybe it is not in their nature to be outgoing to outsiders. [Vancouver]

⁴British Columbia Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres website (<http://www.bcaafc.com/centres/vancouver/>)

In short, tourists do not tend to go where they are not welcome. Unless communities or events lay out a *welcome mat*, domestic tourists who are not familiar with Aboriginal people now will likely continue to seek other destinations and activities within and outside Canada that make them feel welcome.

E. Every city has "its street"

As noted previously, Aboriginal Friendship Centres or cultural centres are located in parts of town that are not considered safe or enticing by many of the non-Aboriginal Canadians in the groups. Those mentioned by name include East Hastings in Vancouver, 20th Street in Saskatoon and Queen and Bathurst in Toronto. By fuelling some of the traditional negative stereotypes of Aboriginal people, these centres reinforce concerns about safety and welcomness.

Some respondents in Saskatoon and Vancouver are more forgiving of these differences than are those in Toronto. Those in Saskatoon attribute the negative image of urban Aboriginal communities to poverty, claiming "every city has its street . . ." for social problems (drunkenness, crime, drug abuse, etc.) whereas those in Toronto are more apt to respond with a sense of concern, uncertainty and fear of Aboriginal people. The heightened sensitivity of Torontonians may be related to the fact that they seek tourism experiences in the company of young children rather than as adults only.

At Queen and Bathurst where they have their meeting place . . . they are swearing and yelling and practically throwing things at you. [Toronto]

We do have 20th street . . . and people would get a certain impression that might not be widespread, but is certainly an impression. See stumbling or drunkenness. But in Ottawa where I used to live, you'll see drunkenness and they are not Aboriginal. They are totally white. People get the totally wrong idea. Every city has its street. In Saskatoon, it happens to be 20th Street. [Saskatoon]

U.S.A. and German tourists are not going to go to East Hastings. In broad daylight, it is dangerous, let alone at night. [Aboriginal tourism sites] have to be in places people feel safe, with their kids. . . . in pleasant surroundings. [Vancouver]

Venues for hearing the stories, seeing arts and crafts and learning about *how things were* must be clean and safe. Some respondents in Toronto went as far as suggesting an *Aboriginal Pioneer Village* or theme park as the appropriate type of site for learning about Aboriginal heritage and culture. Others, while more concerned about maintaining the genuineness of the

experience, still want many of the amenities associated with these sanitized types of tourism sites. Conveniences, child-friendly programming and activities, cleanliness and safety are particularly important to the one group of respondents with young children (Toronto).

Might be nice to have something like Pioneer Village or Fort York [in Toronto]. Something that re-creates how they used to live, with a sense of security, safety and cleanliness. [Toronto]

F. The way things were, the stories, the arts & crafts

There is a clear interest in hearing the legends and stories of Canada's Aboriginal people . . . but some respondents indicated that they do not know where to find the storytellers. They are also interested in how Aboriginal people lived in the "old days", how they carved canoes, built teepees, made their clothes, cooked their food and the like.

But there are really cool stories that go with crafts. Let's hear the stories. We don't hear the stories; our children don't hear them. They will grow up with the same negativities we have.
[Toronto]

We go up north as well to see [Aboriginal] cultures up there and to hear their stories. They are not all pleasant stories. But they are just glad that we came. [Vancouver]

[Aboriginal people] could exploit their culture in a profitable way for themselves by using their stories. What has been passed down. [Vancouver]

Dances and events such as Pow Wows also hold interest. They are, however, more apt to be viewed as "entertainment" than as "cultural experiences" because most respondents recognize that modern Aboriginal people do not walk around their communities in full dance regalia. These "performances" may be fun but are not necessarily viewed as events that increase knowledge of Aboriginal heritage and culture.

[Pow Wows are] presented in such a fairy tale way . . . they are dancing with feathers and tribal masks . . . that is entertainment. Not the culture. It is like taking them [the children] to the ballet. A performance. A big flowery display. You don't learn any heritage. Wonderful to watch but not much to learn. [Toronto]

In Vancouver and Saskatoon, respondents recognize that modern Aboriginal life on a reserve would include people wearing Levis and going about their day-to-day lives much as do other Canadians in rural settlements across the country.

*If you think of tourism, I would think it would be something **special** set up for people to see. But if you are talking about*

*being on a reserve on a **day-to-day** basis, they'd be walking around in Levi's . . . they would take the bus to school, live in houses etc. [Saskatoon]*

In Toronto, however, there is quite a vague sense of what actually "happens" on a reserve . . . accompanied by a general feeling of wariness and uncertainty. If they all *wear jean jackets* or *all shop at the Gap*, however, at least one respondent indicates that seeing life on a reserve would be of little interest.

G. Real interest or just the "right thing to say"?

Every respondent professes interest in "learning more" about Canada's first peoples and acclaims the importance of preserving traditional Aboriginal culture and heritage. But not every respondent has sought tourism or local experiences that would further their knowledge of Aboriginal culture or heritage.

Torontonians seem to be the least motivated to seek out Aboriginal . . . or any other . . . cultural or heritage attraction or event. Some claim that the demands of raising young families dictate tourism choices that focus on children's activities and getting away from the city's stresses and hectic pace. Others suggest that since Toronto is such a multi-cultural city, they have no need to extend themselves:

We are surrounded by so many other cultures all the time that we don't have to go exploring to find out about them.

[Toronto]

Still others exhibit an interest in and willingness to learn more about Aboriginal culture and heritage but do not know how to go about doing so (lack of awareness of appropriate venues/attractions).

Several respondents in Saskatoon also indicate that Aboriginal culture and heritage attractions are "always there" in the background and can be explored once other more "exotic" destinations and cultures such as Mexico, Europe, Egypt or other countries have been visited. In essence, for these respondents, there is no urgency to see what is in Canada's own backyard.

Some respondents attribute their lack of motivation to seek out Aboriginal cultural and heritage tourism experiences to the absence of information. For example, when a dozen brochures depicting Aboriginal attractions and events across Canada were circulated in the groups, virtually all respondents in the three groups claimed **never** to have seen materials such as these.

A Vancouver respondent said that "*there is a wall of brochures on the B.C. Ferry (to Vancouver Island) but not one brochure like these*". Tourism British Columbia representatives who observed the Vancouver focus group clarified that there are, in fact, brochures for Aboriginal tourism destinations on this "wall" of brochures. The discrepancy between what is "presented" and what is "seen" suggests that some respondents are not sufficiently

interested in the Aboriginal tourism products being offered to pick them out of an array of competing activities and destinations.

Many suggestions were made about how to generate better information distribution systems . . . via the web, provincial tourism offices, and the like. It is, however, questionable whether respondents are so ill informed about the range of experiences available to them across the country because of problems in information distribution or their lack of interest in Aboriginal tourism.

If non-Aboriginal Canadians are going to use resources such as the internet/web to find information about tourism activities, there may be a need to examine the "terminology" that is most likely to lead them to Aboriginal sites. For example, the word "Aboriginal" is not the consumer's choice. Instead, when speaking among themselves, they use words such as "Indians", "Natives" or "First Nations" to describe Aboriginal people. For web searches to be successful, cross-referencing of some or all of these words might be useful.

H. Other Impediments: guilt and land claims

Collective guilt about the treatment of Aboriginal peoples by the "government" and the incompatibility of "guilt" and "tourism" emerge as disincentives to pursuing Aboriginal cultural and heritage tourism experiences for several respondents in Toronto.

There's what we saw on TV in the movies [when we were kids] and the plight of what we see today. We know that they have been kind of screwed over by the government. To see the way they live now would not be a vacation. [Instead, it would be] a good "trip in guilt" to see what we have done to a proud people. [Toronto]

People generally avoid things that make them feel bad . . . especially on vacation. [Toronto]

Alternatively, land claim issues and an unstated sense of "threat" to the non-Aboriginal community emerge in the Vancouver group. An interchange among several Vancouver respondents reveals the prominence of the topic.

Respondent 1: Out here (in Vancouver), it's like it (Aboriginal issues) is a daily catastrophe. I don't know what the cause is . . . maybe it is land claims.

Respondent 2: Why land claims?

Respondent 3: Well, it's because they are asking for 110% of B.C. Clearly, there is a dispute even among them about what they are asking for.

Respondent 4: You're not going to do much for Aboriginal tourism until they settle their land claims.

1. What is and is not Aboriginal tourism

Aboriginal tourism is expected to be arts and craft outlets, Pow Wows and other ceremonial events that feature dance, music (drumming), story telling, history and food. It is *past* rather than *present* oriented. Prior to exposure to the brochures presented in the groups, virtually none of the respondents suggested that Aboriginal tourism is associated with activities such as guiding, hunting or fishing. Only two respondents in Vancouver suggested that there is a substantive link between Aboriginal peoples' association with "nature and the land" and "tourism".

Similarly, casinos are not linked to respondents' implicit expectations of "Aboriginal tourism". In fact, casinos on reserves or owned/operated by Aboriginal communities engender a negative response, for two reasons.

- Firstly, most respondents do not associate "gambling" with "tourism" despite a begrudging acknowledgement that destinations like Las Vegas are built on gambling . . . and are clearly "tourist" destinations. "Gambling" has a negative image (unsavoury, organized crime, etc.) while "tourism" has a positive image (fun, wholesome, etc.). Even the one respondent in Toronto who had been to Casino Rama in Orillia did *not* associate the attraction with Aboriginal people or Aboriginal tourism.
- Secondly, there is a resistance to casinos in association with Aboriginal communities. The general unsavouriness of casinos, their associations with illegal activities and stereotypes of poor people "squandering" their limited funds on gambling lead some respondents to suggest that "Aboriginal casinos" would reinforce negative images of Aboriginal communities.

Casinos on reserves would be like having bars on every street corner in poor neighbourhoods. [Toronto]

Several respondents, however, regard casinos as important economic development tools for reserves:

Natives across the border [in Washington state] have done wonderful things with their casinos. They have done wonderful things for their communities. Very well run, millions of dollars going back to communities. [Vancouver]

J. Brochures

The Aboriginal Cultures and Tourism Working Group provided a sample of brochures from Aboriginal tourism attractions and activities for distribution in the focus groups.⁵

- *Artic Nature Tours, Inuvik*
- *Mawandoseg Kitigan Zibi Indian Village, Maniwaki, Quebec*
- *Metepenagiag Outdoor Adventure Lodge, Red Bank, New Brunswick*
- *Routes on the Red, Manitoba*
- *Whetung Ojibwa Centre, Curve Lake Indian Reserve, Ontario*
- *Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, Fort Macleod, Alberta*
- *Aurora Village, Yellowknife, NWT*
- *Kawartha Lakes Spirit Walks, Kawartha Lakes, Ontario*
- *Ookpik Tours & Adventures Ltd., Tuktoyaktuk, NWT*
- *The First Peoples, Manitoba*
- *The Missing Chapters. Aboriginal Adventures, Peterborough, Ontario*
- *Fort George, Buckingham House, Alberta*
- *Aboriginal Experiences in the Heart of Ottawa, Ottawa, Ontario*
- *Pokiak Guiding and Outfitting, Tuktoyaktuk, NWT*

These brochures depict a variety of cultural, heritage and outdoor experiences offered by Aboriginal people across the country.

Reactions to the brochures were very consistent from group to group. Generally, there was astonishment that so many Aboriginal tourism attractions are available in Canada. Further, respondents were dismayed that they had not been exposed to brochures such as those circulated in the sessions and suggested that more extensive marketing and distribution is required to get these materials in front of people like themselves.

The brochures helped crystallize the types of tourism experiences most respondents were interested in having . . . and those that hold virtually no interest. For example, respondents in each group responded very favourably to the ***Mawandoseg Kitigan Zibi Indian Village*** brochure because it focussed on "just the things" they are interested in:

- music/drums

⁵ A complete set of these brochures is on file with the Department of Canadian Heritage.

- feeling hides/pelts
- food [bannock and maple syrup]
- handicrafts
- how birch bark canoes are made
- story telling (listen to Algonquin legends).

Kawartha Lakes Spirit Walks also generated consistently positive feedback because the brochure engendered a strong sense of the *history and culture* of the region's Aboriginal people.

In all sessions, the unique "cut-out" design of **Artic Nature Tours** attracted attention and favourable comment both for its content and design.

Three brochures sparked negative comments among some group members. **Pokiak Guiding and Outfitting** engendered the strongest negative reaction. As noted previously, there was minimal spontaneous association between the concept of Aboriginal tourism and hunting or fishing in any of the groups. Furthermore, none of the respondents in the groups was a hunter. Hence, a brochure featuring dead polar and grizzly bears not only felt at odds with these non-Aboriginal Canadians' perceptions of "Aboriginal tourism" and their preconceptions about the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and nature but the activity itself – big game hunting – also had no appeal to them as tourists. Despite their clear disassociation from "all those dead animals", some respondents recognized the importance of big game hunting as a source of revenue to Aboriginal communities, particularly from American tourists.

Whetung Ojibwa Centre, featuring a Christmas Shop and Tea Room, was seen as more of a "commercial enterprise" than as a place to learn about Aboriginal heritage and culture.

I don't want to go to a place where they are just going to try and sell me stuff. [Vancouver]

While the traditional garb of the dancer featured on the pages of the **Aboriginal Experiences in the Heart of Ottawa** brochure was positively regarded by most people, at least one respondent claimed that this was the "old fashioned" way of depicting Aboriginal people.

IV. Appendix

Discussion Guide

1. Introduction

Our job today is to explore "**images and impressions**" of various aspects of tourism in Canada. As such, you need to be candid. Put aside traditional Canadian politeness . . . and be honest and forthright in how you respond. One-way mirror; tape recording, etc.

2. Ice breakers: personal background, where recently took vacations

3. You all took trips to *sightsee and explore new places*. Thinking of trips you have taken in Canada in the past couple of years, tell me about some of the new places have you explored.

What kind of experiences were you looking for on these recent trips?

- Natural beauty/sites
- Outdoor activities
- Cultural experiences – performances, museums, galleries
- Getting to know the people who live in the place you are visiting?
- Learning more about communities in Canada that have retained many of their cultural traditions
 - What communities?
 - Why those?

PROBE:

1. Level of experiences with various communities
 - Mennonites?
 - Aboriginal people?
 - Other communities?
2. Expectations/benefits

4. If I were to offer you a "**Mennonite tourism experience**" for a day or overnight trip, what do you think it would include?

- What experiences would you expect to have?
- How interested are you in learning more about this offer?
- Why do you say that?

5. What if I were to offer you an "**Aboriginal tourism experience**" for a day or overnight trip. What do you think it would include?

- What experiences would you expect to have?
- How interested are you in learning more about this offer?
- Why do you say that?

6. **Probe differences in response to Mennonite and Aboriginal experiences.**

- Are there particular images or stereotypes that come to mind?
 - Poverty
 - Substance abuse
- Hard to get to (remote/no roads)
- Distance (too far away)
- Physical characteristics (clean, safe, well-kept)
- Emotional characteristics – made to feel welcome or like an “outsider”
- Uncertainty about “how to act” – unaware of cultural “rules”
- Language (ability to communicate with hosts)
- Other

7. Now, let's talk about some of the **key elements** that make for a **successful tourism experience**. As we talk about these, tell me what **your expectations would be of an Aboriginal tourism experience**. [SAME LIST AS QUESTIONNAIRE]

Would you expect . . . (read list and probe for each):

Hospitality – making you feel welcome
Fun
Lots to see and do
Safe
Clean
Environmentally friendly
A beautiful outdoor setting
Providing an opportunity for you to learn about other cultures and communities
Good for families with young children
Good for mature couples
Good for young singles/couples
High quality accommodation
High quality food
Easy to communicate your needs to your hosts

For the next few minutes, we are going to talk about some specific types of Aboriginal tourism products.

8. We will start with an **Aboriginal culture/heritage attraction** such as a museum or gallery. Examples would include the Whetung Ojibwa Centre (north of Peterborough, Ontario); Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump Interpretive Centre (near Fort Macleod, Alberta), Wanuskewin Heritage Park (near Saskatoon) or the House of Himwitsa (in Tofino, B.C.)

Have you ever been to an attraction such as these/this?

IF YES:

Where? (local area; other parts of Canada? Other countries?)

When? (as child; as adult?)

Who initiated the trip? (adult; school/other organized trip/children?)

IF NO: Why not?

Awareness?

General level of interest in Aboriginal culture? (High, medium, low)

Potential Barriers

- Competing destinations / competing experiences (other places/things rather do first)?
- Distance - too far away?
- Remote – too hard to get to?

9. What would you **expect an Aboriginal culture/heritage attraction such as a museum or gallery** to be like? PROBE SPECIFICS:

- Quality of content/experience
- Physical characteristics (clean, safe, well-kept)
- Emotional characteristics – made to feel welcome or like an “outsider”
- Uncertainty about “how to act” – unaware of cultural “rules”
- Communication concerns (don’t speak English)
- Other

10. How interested are you in going (going again)?

11. What would make you more interested in going?

REPEAT AS ABOVE FOR:

- Aboriginal events such as Pow Wows
- A visit to a reserve
- An Aboriginal-owned/operated hunting or fishing camp or lodge
- Aboriginal cultural experience such as a tipi camp

12. Here are some examples of Aboriginal tourism experiences from across Canada (**DISPLAY BROCHURES**).

How well do these descriptions match your impressions of what Aboriginal tourism experiences would be like? **Probe extensively.**

13. Let’s assume that your **job** were to get people like yourself and your neighbours to visit an Aboriginal site or tourist attraction.

Would your job be easy or hard?

Probe for reasons.

What would be your best selling tool?

What would be your biggest obstacle to success?

14. Any other comments?

Screening Criteria/Questionnaire

All respondents:

- Travellers, as per sample screening questionnaire
- All either born in Canada or resident for 5+ years
- Mix of income; all \$50,000+ household income
- Mix of secondary/post secondary/university education
- Mix of genders
- Not Aboriginal

- No experience on travel/tourism topics in past 2 years
- At least 4 first-time respondents in each group
- No group/qualitative participation in past year

Differences in Composition/Location

A1 25 – 44 with children/teens living at home Toronto, July 14, 7:00 pm (date/time to be confirmed)

A2 25 – 44 with no children/teens living at home Saskatoon, July 20 7:00 pm (date/time to be confirmed)

B 45 – 60 with no children/teens living at home Vancouver, July 21 7:00 pm (date/time to be confirmed)

Screening Questions

Travel

How many same-day excursions (trips that begin and end in the same day) or overnight trips have you taken to Canadian destinations in the past 2 years to **sightsee and explore new places**, excluding trips to your own cottage, cabin or vacation home?

None	DO NOT RECRUIT
1 – 5	DO NOT RECRUIT
6 – 10	
More than 10	

Place of Birth/Years in Canada

Were you born in Canada?

Yes

No

IF NO: For how many years have you lived in Canada?

Less than 5 years	DO NOT RECRUIT
5+ years	No more than 3 per group

Background

Are you an Aboriginal person, that is, a status or non-status North American Indian, Métis or Inuit?

Yes	DO NOT RECRUIT
No	
Don't Know/Refused	DO NOT RECRUIT

Age

25 – 34	½ for group A
35 – 44	½ for group A
45 – 54	½ for group B
55 – 60	½ for group B
Over 60	DO NOT RECRUIT

Education

Less than secondary graduation	DO NOT RECRUIT
Graduated secondary	
Some college/university	
Graduated university	

Household Composition

Any children 12 or under	½ for group A1
Any teens (13 – 18)	½ for group A1
No children/teens living in household	Group A2, B

Household Income

Less than \$50,000	DO NOT RECRUIT
\$50,000 - \$74,000	
\$75,000 - \$100,000	
Over \$100,000	

Gender

Male
Female

Respondent fees: \$60.00/show